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THE  
REAL DANGERS  
OF  
HOME RULE.

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Two or three of the London newspapers recently sent over special representatives for the purpose of ascertaining Irish opinion, and especially Irish Protestant opinion, on the subject of Home Rule in Ireland. These gentlemen had, undoubtedly, one advantage in the prosecution of their task—they had no Irish prejudices one way or the other, for they were not Irishmen ; and they had probably persuaded themselves that they had no prejudice of any kind on the subject which they had come to investigate. At the same time they were equally without the knowledge which only a lengthened residence in Ireland can give, and without which it is impossible for a stranger even to set about getting information which will be of the slightest value. One of these gentlemen went, apparently, to the Catholic Lord Mayor of Dublin ; and then, in order to ascertain Protestant opinion, he betook himself to one of the only two or three Protestants in Dublin who are avowed Nationalists. True, the same gentleman seems subsequently to have interviewed some Protestant gentlemen whose opinions are somewhat more representative than those of Mr. Alfred Webb,

the ‘coadjutor of Mr. Isaac Butt.’ But the interviewer appears to have been singularly unhappy in his selection of persons to interview. Of course Nationalists scout any suggestion that when they shall have obtained the power to oppress the Anti-Nationalist minority they will make use of that power. Of course, ‘Protestant Nationalists’ will be equally at ease in their minds on the point; and, of course, the ‘extreme’ Protestant—the man who might, perhaps, be described as a Protestant first and nothing afterwards—will be, perhaps, unduly apprehensive of oppression and unfair treatment, and possibly of persecution. But there are other classes in Ireland besides these. There is the sensible Protestant, who believes that the days of ‘persecution’, in the old sense, have passed away, but who at the same time can foresee that persecution in a new sense is not only possible under a certain state of things in Ireland, but that it is highly probable. Protestants in Ireland do not apprehend martyrdom at the hands of their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects. Many of the latter are highly educated, and are thoroughly liberal in their ideas, and would not dream of ‘persecuting’ or doing injustice in any form to their Protestant fellow-subjects. But these are not the men who would be the leaders of Irish opinion: these are, to a large extent, at this moment the victims of the leaders of Irish opinion—that is, the leaders of the opinion of the great mass of the people. This great mass is not bigoted or ill-intentioned, but it is wofully unedu-

cated. It never reads anything save that which is written on the 'popular' side, and consequently is not likely to realize that there are two sides to almost every question. The result is that the Irish 'people' follow blindly those who flatter them most and promise them most, and who speak most disparagingly of the British people and the British Government. The question of the hour is not a question of the protection of the Protestant minority, nor is it a question of the protection of the property of the landlords. The real question is the protection of individual liberty—the protection of the rights of the minority, whether they be Protestants or Catholics, landlords or tenants, land-leaguers or land-grabbers. It is surely absurd to ask whether boycotting would be used after Home Rule is granted, when the men who have been most prominent in advocating Home Rule have all through made boycotting a cardinal point in their creed. It is said, no doubt, that the weapon of boycotting has been used only against 'felonious landlordism.' Even if this were as true as it is notoriously false, may not anything be at any moment declared 'felonious' by an Irish Parliament or an Irish Government composed of men like Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. T. M. Healy? As to the protection of property, does not everyone know that the prominent advocates of Home Rule have declared over and over again that there can be no real settlement of the Irish Land Question until the question is dealt with by an independent Irish Par-

liament in College-green? Only a few weeks ago, at a meeting held near Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, after the eviction of a tenant for non-payment of rent, a resolution was passed declaring that the meeting was resolved to sustain the evicted man and his family, pending the establishment, 'now rapidly approaching, of a native Parliament, which would reinstate him in his holding.' These are the sentiments of the National League branches; and it is the National League branches who elected the present eighty-six Irish Nationalist members of Parliament. It was one of these branches—that of Tipperary—which the other day, as reported in the *Irish Times* of 12th January, 1886, passed a resolution declaring that any person who had during the past year been brought before the League for any infringement of the rules of boycotting should not be readmitted to membership until after a full explanation; and should they offend again, or rather be again accused of offending, they would be summarily expelled, 'even without a trial.'

But the more important question is the effect which Home Rule (that is, supposing Home Rule to mean the power of making laws, and, in particular, of imposing taxes) would have upon the interests of the minority. As I have said, persecution, in the old sense of the word, may be dismissed as, to say the least, highly improbable. But is there no way of affecting Protestants, or the interests of Protestants, injuriously, except by direct and open persecution? It is tacitly admitted that

the Roman Catholics of Dublin would not be unlikely to put in a claim for at least one of the Dublin Cathedrals, both of which have been restored by the outlay of immense sums of money by Protestants. There is, in print, in a recently published history of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kildare, a hint, by no means obscure, of the coming time, when the Cathedral of Kildare—which has been partially restored with money contributed by Protestants—shall be restored to its ‘rightful owners.’ These are but trifles—straws, perhaps; but the old proverb has not yet lost its force. The more serious question, however, is the question of taxation.

The Parnellite faction would estimate at its true value an ‘Irish Parliament,’ which would not have control of the purse-strings. They have constantly shown a deep interest in the provision of the ‘sinews of war,’ and they have shown exceptional aptitude for disposing of these ‘sinews’ without troubling themselves to give particulars of the disposition to anyone. What guarantee would there be with an Irish Parliament that the industrious and thrifty members of the population would not be oppressed by taxation for the most multifarious objects? Already local taxation in Ireland has become an intolerable burden. I am one of those who view with apprehension the growth of that semi-communism which is giving, by means of Industrial Schools and like institutions, an educational and industrial training to the children of the lazy and



the thriftless which is denied to the children of the great mass of the industrious and the thrifty. I am aware that the subject is one full of difficulty, and that there are many weighty arguments in favour of the establishment of such institutions. But there are arguments against them as well, or at all events in favour of a modification of the system on which they are worked.

I for one entertain strong apprehensions that, instead of a modification of the system, an Irish Parliament, formed of men who believe in the omnipotence of the State to cure all social evils, would extend the system and intensify the objectionable features which are perhaps inseparable from the working of all subsidized industries. I am a firm believer in the principle of Free Trade and free competition; but there is no free competition—it is absurd to dignify it with the title of competition—between the independent, hardworking, tax-paying artisan and the subsidized, tax-supported Industrial School.

But it is the declared Protectionist views of some of the leaders of the Parnellite Party that give rise to the most serious apprehensions amongst all thoughtful men in Ireland, and to induce them to regard with most profound distrust the proposal to grant the power of legislation for Ireland to the Parnellite Party: for that is what an Irish Parliament would amount to. Is there any one credulous enough to believe that a system of ‘discipline’ which has proved so powerful in the

past would be abandoned upon an Irish Parliament becoming an accomplished fact? An Irish Parliament can but be a means to an end. Does anyone suppose that while that 'end'—whatever it may be, and we have not been told what it is—is yet to be attained, the means adopted to keep the Irish Party 'united' in the past would not be as freely and as determinedly resorted to in the future, with a Parliament in College-green?

Hints are occasionally dropped to the effect that the iron 'discipline' which keeps up at least an appearance of unanimity would no longer be exercised if Ireland had a Parliament of her own. Those who are foolish enough to believe this are welcome to do so. I cannot see that while yet all the substantial 'benefits' that are expected to flow from an Irish Parliament are unrealized, the policy of 'union' on the part of the 'representatives of the great mass of the Irish people' in that Parliament is likely to be discarded. I prefer to judge the Parnellite leaders by what they have done in the past, while seeking for power, rather than by effusive promises of toleration and liberality, to be brought into play when that power is conferred on them. I have no faith in such promises from men who have openly advocated boycotting, who sneer at the most patent proofs of organized intimidation, and who condemn outrage and murder, chiefly because these are 'calculated to injure the "National Cause."' In the only lengthened conversation which I ever

had with the late Mr. Isaac Butt, I ventured to express a doubt whether the vaunted liberality of southern constituencies, in returning Protestants to represent them in Parliament, proved anything but a willingness to adopt any means in order to obtain power. I wonder what the freedom-loving, justice-loving, large-souled Isaac Butt would have said had he lived to see the developments of recent years—the boycotting, the intimidation, the moon-lighting, the murders, which, however responsibility may be disclaimed for them, have been the principal causes of the success of the National League movement.

But this is rather a digression. One of the objects which the Parnellite Party set before them for accomplishment, when they shall have been installed in College-green, and in a ‘purified’ Dublin Castle, is the ‘fostering of Irish industries.’ What that means is not left a matter of doubt; what the men engaged in the various Irish industries understand by it is not a matter of doubt. At a meeting some time ago of what was then called the Irish Protective Association, but is now called the Irish Industrial League, and which was attended by about a score of people, most of those present representing different branches of industry, the necessity for Protection all round was insisted on. ‘Burn everything from England, except her coal,’ was the motto of the meeting. Now, if I were an Englishman I should not object to that. Mr. Chamberlain never made a greater

mistake in his life than when he expressed an 'apprehension' that an Irish Parliament would seek, by Protection, to exclude English manufactures. He showed a lamentable want of appreciation of the true character and objects of Free Trade. By any such policy as that suggested, Ireland could only injure herself. The apostles of Free Trade in England made a great mistake in showing any anxiety, and even in entertaining any desire, that other nations should become converts to the principle of Free Trade. People are always sceptical when professions of disinterested philanthropy are made. The essential principle of Free Trade is that it benefits the nation which adopts it, whether other nations adopt it or not. If commercial treaties are beneficial, if the principle underlying them is a true principle, then the principle of Free Trade is utterly wrong. The two things are diametrically opposed to each other. Yet England has had her commercial treaties since she formally adopted Free Trade. And therefore Mr. Chamberlain may be excused for thinking that the adoption of a system of protective duties in Ireland would injure England. If it would injure England there would be some reason for anticipating that it would benefit Ireland. But the loss would be Ireland's not England's. Nothing will so effectually kill any industry as the 'fostering' of it by protective duties. In any case, it is the people who thus tax the necessities, the conveniences, or the comforts, of life, who suffer, not those who produce the articles which

minister to these objects. It is, therefore, Irishmen who have most reason to fear the establishment of an Irish Parliament, if that Irish Parliament would be likely to take to the 'fostering' of Irish industries. There are many Irish industries which are capable of development; but a forced growth, a hothouse development of any industry, will never bring that industry to a healthy condition. The most effective way of fostering Irish industries is to get rid of the unhealthy agitation which has prevailed in the country for the last half-dozen years: to instil into the minds of the people of all classes that the true secret of industrial progress is hard work, and to recognize more fully, in the words of Goldsmith:

'How small, of all that human hearts endure,  
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure.'

'Persecution for conscience' sake' is a phrase applicable to other things besides the profession of religious views. Religious liberty cannot exist where there is persecution for religious profession. Equally, there is no political liberty where men are boycotted because they express political views opposed to those of the majority, or where a man who honestly expresses his views on matters of public policy exposes himself to the risk of commercial or professional ruin. I have said 'the views of the majority.' The phrase is utterly misrepresentative. There can be no true estimate of public opinion—no one can tell what 'the views of the majority' are, when a penalty is attached to the

expression of any opinions, save such as have received the sanction of those who have assumed to themselves the position of dictators of the people.

As to freedom of the Press, it would become a thing of the past. The Land League, it will be remembered, was still an infant institution when Mr. Patrick Egan proposed to exclude from it the representative of one of the Dublin Newspapers—the *Daily Express*. There were, however, more prudent men in the organization than Mr. Patrick Egan, and the proposal was, after considerable discussion—in which the imprudence of the proposal was urged as the chief argument against it—negatived. But with a Parliament in power, reflecting the opinions of *United Ireland*, there would no longer be any necessity for prudence. The plea that opposition journals lived by ‘lying’ and by ‘lie mintage’ would be sufficient. Proof would be considered quite superfluous, as it has been considered to be quite superfluous in the past. Ireland would be quiet, it would be united, it would be still: but it would be the stillness of the Dead Sea; not the healthy harmony which exists where men have freedom of speech, and where they have tolerance enough, and breadth of thought sufficient to permit of their agreeing to differ.



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